



2014 Citizen of the Year



Nominee: Erik Bertelson

Nominators: Liz Crocker; Michael Utsumi; Patty Shipps; & Laura Moore

In the Nominators' words:

Erik Bertelson, or "Bert," as so many call him, has been an integral part of the Dublin School District and community since 1979. In 2014, Bert inspired both the Wells Band and Color Guard, and led them to receive 1st Place at the Santa Cruz Band Review, and 2nd Place at the Foothill Band Review.

With resources decreasing in the elementary schools, Bert has been given the opportunity to work with students with less musical experience coming into 6th grade. Bert has taken this opportunity and empowered all of his students, regardless of skill level, to be amazing musicians. He inspires from both an emotional level, showing each student that, not only does he believe in them, but that they can also believe in themselves, and also from an academic level, introducing new tools to help students practice more effectively at home.



Not only does Bert create a concert band that is filled with happy and motivated students, but he also leads a jazz band that sounds amazing! With this band, he loves doing community outreach, performing each year at both the Dublin Senior Center, as well as during the holidays at Barnes and Nobel bookstore in the Dublin Hacienda Shopping Center. While Bert is not the main advisor for Color Guard, he was definitely a lead for the Guard and volunteered countless hours to inspire these girls, as well. He worked with them on their marching, a key component to their performance, but also inspired and motivated the girls, and let them know that he believed in them.

When Bert walks in the room, the spirits of all of the kids rise. Even if he says they need more work, it's always taken in the spirit intended, which is supportive. During performances, he doesn't say a lot verbally, but the look of pride shines on his face and in his eyes. Most importantly is the impact Bert has on an individual basis, as he sends students on to be more positively impactful to our community. I've seen kids enter band being very shy, and under his guidance, they grow into considerably more confident individuals. He pushes kids to be their best, challenging them in a safe environment, but not allowing them to slide. If you talk to any student who has ever been in band, I am confident they will say the same. Bert not only teaches the playing of instruments and reading music, but he teaches life skills and confidence; he teaches kids that it's okay to challenge themselves and face their fears, and that they CAN and WILL succeed.

Bert is the most responsible teacher, giving hundreds of extra hours to his students and our community by leading performances in the Dublin Parade, competing at four Bay Area band reviews on weekends, to even spending days down south to have his band march down Main Street at Disneyland. To prepare the bands, who all come together to form the Marching Band, Bert spends several hours on many days after school to help them learn to march while playing their instruments. The results are displayed during the marching competitions in the fall, the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade, and our annual trip to Disneyland in the spring. It is always an impressive sight! Hard to believe these are middle school students. They are so prepared for their continuing journey as musicians in high school.

A few weeks ago, I needed some advice for a tri flute piece to play with my daughter and niece at a memorial for my Dad's recent passing. I was expecting him to simply point me in the right direction. He went the extra several steps and went to a music store to purchase the book with a piece appropriate for us. He would not accept anything in return. Classic Bert. As with any arts program comes the challenge of financing our bands. As parents, we can see, very easily, the impact that Bert has on our children, so there is never a shortage of volunteers to help in all areas where he needs assistance. We see, consistently, how he is with our children -- patient, understanding (even when they forget their instrument before a performance!) and always willing to help them.